

CALIFORNIA STATE PARKS
CHANNEL COAST DISTRICT & CITY OF VENTURA
SAN BUENAVENTURA STATE BEACH
SAFE BEACH PROGRAM for PIERPONT BEACH

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What is the Safe Beach Program for Pierpont Beach?

A. The Safe Beach Program for Pierpont Beach is a cooperative partnership among California State Parks, the City of Ventura and the residents and businesses of Ventura's Pierpont Beach community to create a safe and enjoyable beach experience for everyone along the Pierpont Beach in the City of Ventura.

Q. Why is this program being developed?

A. The Safe Beach Program is a logical outgrowth of the three partners' desire to make sure that everyone enjoys a safe and enjoyable experience when visiting the Pierpont Beach area. The catalyst for the program was the tragic death of a Pierpont Beach resident who drowned while trying to save his 4-year-old grandniece in heavy, cold surf in December 2006. The grandniece had been swept by waves off one of the rock jetties that extend into the ocean along San Buenaventura State Beach. Following the incident, members of the Pierpont community approached District Superintendent Richard Rojas with their concerns. Mr. Rojas contacted Ventura officials including Peter Brown, head of the City's Community Services Department, and together the three groups developed the Safe Beach Program.

Q. Where is the program being implemented?

A. The program is being implemented on a portion of San Buenaventura State Beach between San Pedro Street and Greenock Lane and also at Ventura's Marina Park.

Q. What does the program involve?

A. The Safe Beach Program is a comprehensive improvement effort that involves 7-day-a-week Lifeguard coverage from three additional Lifeguard towers installed along Pierpont Beach, improved safety signage, and an information campaign to provide beach users with safe ways to use the beach. The names of streets painted on walls along the beach will aid emergency responders to quickly determine where their services are needed. Beach users will be warned by Lifeguards and by signs about unsafe ocean conditions that exist at Marina Park and around the rock jetties.

Q. What unsafe ocean conditions exist?

A. The rock jetties, which were installed to slow erosion of the beach, also create and magnify ocean currents that can catch unsuspecting swimmers and waders by surprise, sweeping them into the water and against the sharp rock surfaces. People walking on the jetties have been swept into

the water by waves and swells. At Marina Park, the ocean currents are unusually strong and can quickly pull people out into deeper water.

Q. Where will the Lifeguard towers be placed?

A. The Lifeguard towers will be located at the foot of Seaward Avenue, between Martha's Vineyard Court and New Bedford Court, and at the end of Greenock Lane. These locations let Lifeguards monitor the maximum stretch of beach while allowing them to support one another during rescues and other safety contacts.

Q. When will the expanded Lifeguard service take effect?

A. Current plans call for Lifeguard service from the towers to begin by July 4th.

Q. How long will the program last?

A. Some elements of the Safe Beach Program, such as signage and informational services, will remain in effect from now on. The three Lifeguard towers will be staffed seven days a week through Labor Day and on weekends through September 2007. They will be removed in October. Reduced State Park Lifeguard coverage will continue during the off-season.

Q. What about next year?

A. A search is underway for funding to continue the program beyond 2007, but the sources of those funds have not yet been determined. The program will be continued only when funding is confirmed.

Q. What role are the Pierpont Beach residents playing in the Safe Beach Program?

A. Pierpont Beach community members, through a concerted neighborhood effort, have raised enough money to pay for approximately one-third of the cost of the expanded Lifeguard service along Pierpont Beach this summer. In addition, they are continuing to meet with District and City representatives to develop and implement ways to improve the safety and attractiveness of the Pierpont Beach portion of San Buenaventura State Beach and Marina Park for all beach users.

Q. What role is the City of Ventura playing in the Safe Beach Program?

A. The City of Ventura is a key partner in the program and will provide funding from its Community Services Department budget to cover the shortfall between the funds raised by the Pierpont community and the program's actual costs. This is a one-time allocation that uses funds available from its 2006 budget. In addition, the Ventura Police Department will provide an all-terrain vehicle (ATV) for State Park Lifeguards to use to patrol the beach and provide backup for the Lifeguards in the towers.

Q. What is California State Parks providing for the Safe Beach Program?

A. California State Parks through its Channel Coast District will provide trained State Park Lifeguards and the support systems that they will use, including communications, emergency medical services, and the on-going supervision and training required to maintain the high level of service State Park Lifeguards are known for. In addition, the District will provide all necessary administrative support for the Lifeguard program.

Q. What about the Lifeguards?

A. California State Park Lifeguards are highly trained professionals whose first priority is to keep beach users safe. They are able to rescue people who get into trouble caused by rip currents, underwater holes, dangerous marine life and other water-related hazards. State Park Lifeguards provide emergency medical treatment and can ensure that an injured or sick visitor is connected quickly to advanced life-support when necessary. In addition, State Park Lifeguards constantly scan the beach, ready to take steps to prevent accidents before they happen. They may set up "Safe Swim" Zones or designate special zones for surfers. Finally, they enforce rules that ensure an enjoyable beach experience for everyone, such as "No dogs on the beach" and anti-litter laws.

Q. I've been bringing my dog to Pierpont Beach for years. Why do I have to stop now?

A. While many people enjoy the company of a dog at the beach, these canine companions can cause problems. In addition to the health hazard caused by dog droppings left on the beach by thoughtless pet owners, some dogs create safety concerns and can also have a negative impact on the wildlife that is part of the beach environment. Bringing a dog onto the Pierpont Beach portion of San Buenaventura State Beach has never been legal. Our ability to enforce this rule, however, has sometimes been limited by a lack of staff. When State Park Lifeguards begin guarding Pierpont Beach this summer, they will inform visitors about the "No dogs on the beach" rule and request that they take their pet off the beach. After an initial grace period, Lifeguards will identify violators and may issue courtesy warnings. Repeat offenders will be subject to citations and fines.

Q. What other rules and regulations will be enforced on Pierpont Beach once Lifeguards are in place?

A. As part of the Safe Beach Program, State Park Lifeguards and Park Rangers as well as Ventura Police Officers will enforce regulations that prohibit illegal ground fires, fireworks, overnight camping and other laws.

Q. If one of the reasons this program is being implemented was the drowning of the man in the winter of 2006, will the District provide Lifeguard service along the Pierpont during the winter?

A. The District provides year-round Lifeguard service at San Buenaventura State Beach, including Pierpont Beach. However, coverage is reduced during the off-season from Labor Day to mid-June, which generally coincides with reduced visitation, because of funding and staffing limitations. Given the current fiscal realities, the District is not in a position to change this staffing plan. But it is working with the Pierpont Beach community and the City's emergency service providers (Police

and Fire Departments) to develop new strategies to increase the safety of beach visitors during the off-season. These strategies include a public-education program to increase public awareness of the need to “think safety” at the beach, particularly when Lifeguards are not on duty. For example, signs and other information sources are being considered to warn visitors about the hazards found around rock jetties, especially during times of heavy surf.

Q. How can I help?

A. Everyone who enjoys the beach plays a vital role in ensuring that the beach is as safe and attractive as possible. One of the most important ways to help is to develop safety awareness. When you arrive at the beach, look for signs that tell you about potential hazards. If a Lifeguard is on duty, ask him or her to show you where the safest areas to swim are. They’ll be happy to tell you and also inform you of current conditions you should be aware of. If Lifeguards are not on duty, use extra caution. Finally, follow these Top Ten Tips for a safe and enjoyable beach experience:

TOP TEN TIPS
For Your Beach Safety

1. Learn to swim. It’s fun!
2. Swim near a Lifeguard in the guarded section of the beach.
3. Check water conditions before entering and know your limitations.
4. Never swim alone.
5. If caught in a rip current, swim parallel to shore.
6. Never dive head first.
7. Never swim after consuming alcohol or drugs.
8. Always wear sunscreen. Consider protective clothing.
9. Never build a fire on the beach unless fire rings are provided.
10. Put litter—especially glass containers—in its place, not on the beach!